Bringing produce into the packing shed:

- Produce that comes into the wash/pack needs to be recorded on a harvest log; check that this has happened whenever produce enters the packing shed.

- Keep produce out of direct sunlight whenever possible! Leafy crops are very fragile and will wilt within a bin that sits in direct sunlight for as little as a half hour. Keep produce in the shade when possible.

- Leafy produce coming from the field on a hot day needs to be hydrocooled when it is brought into the packing shed if it will not be washed immediately. This is done by lifting the lid off of the tub, holding it at an angle and spraying water at the lid. By moving the lid around over the tub, you can gently drip water down onto the crop.

Produce washing methods:

Cabbage, broccoli, bok choi, all leafy greens and herbs except basil: Produce is submerged in the water tank in order to remove surface dirt, then transferred to the sanitizer tank where it is submerged for 1 minute. Produce is removed, drained as much as possible and placed into a closed rubber maid container.

Bunched root vegetables (scallions, radishes, beets, carrots, turnips): bunches are lined up in a couple layers on the spraying table and sprayed to remove surface dirt. Bunches are picked up one at a time and placed in a bin, spraying as necessary to remove dirt.

Paste tomatoes, eggplant, peppers: These are typically not washed, but can be put through the brush washer to remove surface dirt.

Cucumbers, squash: These are typically not washed unless very dirty. You can do this with careful spraying or wipe with a wet paper towel. Cucumbers with a lot of spines have their spines wiped off either by hand or with a paper towel.

Globe and heirloom tomatoes: These are typically not washed but can be gently sprayed and wiped to remove any surface mold (high tunnel tomatoes).

Bulk roots (carrots, beets, radishes, potatoes, turnips): These are put through the barrel washer.

Garlic, Onions: These are not washed at all, but cleaned dry.

Mushrooms: These are not washed

Storage conditions

Different crops are processed based on conditions needed for the longest possible storage life. Several factors play a very important role in storage.
1) Moisture: some crops need to stay moist to remain hydrated, while others will quickly rot when exposed. Surface moisture can be a problem, causing growth of biofilms and eventually turning the produce into a slime pile. You want the water in the crop, not ON the crop. We drill holes in the bottom of closed tubs to allow for water drainage.

2) Airflow: most crops are stored in closed bins to retain moisture, but airflow can be useful to avoid surface condensation on crops such as tomatoes, potatoes, and winter squash.

3) Temperature: Generally speaking, colder temperatures are better to reduce spoilage but there are several exceptions where excessive cold will reduce the quality of stored produce (e.g. Basil, tomatoes, eggplant). We typically use two temperature ranges 32-38F and 50-60F.

4) Sanitization: keeping produce in clean containers and clean cooler spaces reduces the supply of mold spores and other contaminants that would love to grow on stored produce. Bottom boxes keep moisture and mud from the floor from getting into bins through the bottom.

Coolers

Coolers are monitored for consistent temperature ranges and cleaned occasionally. Cleaning and temperature logging is recorded on appropriate logs in the cold storage room.

1) Cold 32-38F: All leafy greens, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, beets, turnips, radishes, scallions, mushrooms, leafy herbs except basil, peppers (long term)
2) Warm 50-60F: Eggplant, tomatoes, basil, potatoes, squash, onions, peppers (short term)